

madeleines

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Madeleines

Small shell-shaped sponge cakes with a distinct hump on the back, from Commercy and Liverdun in Lorraine, and the most famous cake in French literature for reasons that have nothing to do with baking. They sit between a cake and a cookie and they have a genuinely short shelf life — a madeleine more than four hours old has lost the crisp edge that makes it worth making.

The hump is the whole game.

What makes it work

- **Rest the batter cold for at least an hour, ideally overnight.** A cold batter hitting a hot pan sets its outside immediately while the inside is still expanding, and that pressure forces the hump. No rest, no hump.
- **A cold pan into a hot oven** compounds the effect. Chill the buttered, floured mould in the fridge or freezer while the oven heats.
- **High heat first.** Some bakers start at 220 °C for four minutes and drop to 180 °C; a straight 200 °C also works.
- **Butter and flour the mould even if it is non-stick.** Madeleine tins are detailed and cakes weld into the ridges. Brush melted butter, dust flour, tap out the excess.
- **Fill two-thirds only** and do not spread the batter — it finds its own level.

Ingredients

Makes 24.

- 3 [eggs](#), room temperature
- 130 g caster sugar
- 150 g all-purpose flour
- 6 g baking powder
- 3 g fine salt
- 150 g unsalted butter, melted and cooled, plus more for the tin
- zest of 1 [lemon](#) or 1 orange
- 1 tbsp [honey](#)
- 1 tsp vanilla — see [Pure vanilla extract](#)

Method

Whisk the eggs, sugar and honey for four minutes until pale and thickened.

Sift in the flour, baking powder and salt and fold gently. Fold in the melted butter, zest and vanilla in two additions.

Cover and refrigerate at least one hour, and up to two days.

Butter and flour the madeleine tin and chill it. Heat the oven to **200 °C / 400 °F**.

Spoon or pipe batter into each shell, two-thirds full, straight from the fridge. Bake **9–11 minutes**, until the humps have risen and the edges are brown.

Knock them out immediately onto a rack. Eat within the hour.

Notes

- **Brown butter** in place of plain, cooled, is the single best upgrade — see [brown butter toffee cookies](#) for what browning does.
- Dipping half in chocolate, or glazing with lemon icing, extends their life to a day and is what most

French bakeries do.

- **Financiers are the close relative** — almond, egg white, brown butter, and they keep far better. See [financiers](#).

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